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ABSTRACT

This study established baseline data, compared Tennessee high school students' and parents' perceptions about working This study established baseline data, compared Tennessee sales tax contributions of the students. The study was limited to the perceptions of the high school students and their parents concerning working part time while in high school. The questionnaire, The Tennessee Secondary Student Employment Survey, that was developed consisted of demographic questions and 31 opinion items pertaining to high school students working. A random sample of 1,980 students and 1,021 parents in selected school and grade levels participated in the study. This research was based on three questions: (1) the opinions of these students about working part time; (2) the opinions of their parents; and (3) differences between student and parent opinions about the effects of working part time. On the whole, students and parents felt that working part time during high school helped students. Parents and students agreed that working part time did not help students improve their grades, improve their school attendance, and stay in school. More students than parents agreed that students should work as many hours as they wish. More parents than students agreed with limiting weekly work to 20 hours. and thought that working more than 20 hours per week would cause high school grades to drop. (15 references) (NLA)

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DOES WORKING PART-TIME ENHANCE SECONDARY EDUCATION?

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DOES WORKING PART-TIME ENHANCE SECONDARY EDUCATION?

Introduction

Today's high school students and their parents may be more progressive than today's educational reformers. High school students are seeking experiences beyond the schools in the form of part-time employment for a variety of reasons. Part-time employment is enabling the students to develop general employment skills as well as higher self-esteem, a positive work ethic, and the acceptance of responsibilities. The vast majority of today's high school students are either holding part-time jobs or expressing a desire for employment during the school year. Further, their parents support part-time employment within certain limits.

The quantity and quality of information pertaining to high school students holding part-time employment is limited. Especially studies that include parents. This paper is based in part on the finding from the more comprehensive report, Students' and Parents' Perceptions About Working Part-Time During the School Year in Tennessee Public High Schools (McNelly, Mann, and Petty, 1990). This study established baseline data, compared students' and parents' perceptions about working part-time during the school year and projected the earnings and sales tax contributions of the students. This report is limited to the perceptions of the high school students and their parents concerning working part-time while in high school.

Related Literature Review

From the review of the related literature, selected generalizations are as follows:

1. Sixty percent of the high school students were working, and an additional twenty-five percent were looking for work but unable to find jobs (Borus, 1981).
2. Students from the lowest family income level are the most likely to be unemployed (Lewin-Epstein, 1981).
3. The average number of hours of work per week ranges from 19 hours for seniors to 13 for sophomores (Lewin-Epstein, 1981).

4. Males in high school are more likely to work and to work longer hours than their female counterparts (Sharpiro, 1983).

5. Vocational students, especially males, are more likely to work longer hours than students in other high school programs. Working did not have any discernable effect on the academic performance of working vocational students (Desy, 1984).

6. Students working less than 20 hours per week had the highest GPA. Those working more than 20 hours per week and those who were unemployed had lower GPAs (Schill, McCartin, & Meyer, 1985).

7. Adolescents with higher grades and plans to go on for further education are more likely to work moderate hours so as not to jeopardize their continued academic achievement (Meyer, 1987).

8. Young people who are from families of low socioeconomic status or who are less successful in the school environment are likely to be working the most hours (Meyer, 1987).

9. Students who did not work, and students who worked 20 hours or more spent approximately the same amount of time on homework and watching television (Lewin-Epstein, p. 54, 1981).

10. Time spent at work is second only to time spent in class. Time spent at work was not spent at the expense of other important youth activities. The only group whose adolescent activities were compromised by work were seniors working more than the average number of hours (19.3) (Lewin-Epstein, 1981).

11. Those who worked more while in high school also worked the most in the year following graduation, were unemployed less and obtained more skill training while on the job compared with their nonworking age mates (Miguel and Faulk, 1984).

12. Youths' attitudes toward work are not significantly different from those of older workers. There is no evidence that they possess an "immature" view of work (Adrisani, 1978).

13. Working increases youngsters' understanding of life by showing them adult expectations. The value of money is learned, what is required to make it, how to spend it, and how to manage it well (Stephens, 1979).
14. Paid work for youth will teach responsibility, acquaint them with the labor market, enhance the development of self-esteem and a work ethic (Carnegie Commission, National Commission on Youth and President's Science Advisory Committee).
15. Parents felt that work for youth would build character, acquaint teens with the facts about the "real" world, fosters responsibility and dependability, punctuality, and the setting aside of personal preferences in order to meet work expectations (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986).
16. Increase the flexibility in schools and other sources of learning (The Forgotten Half: Non College Youth in America, 1988).
17. Schools should promote the integration of youths' work experience and school activities. Parents must monitor the effects of their children's employment carefully (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986).
18. Cooperative vocational education students develop positive work attitudes. Jobs associated with co-op programs are often different from the "typical" teen jobs in that a higher level of skill is often required and specific skill training is included (Baker, 1985).
19. The majority of the Tennessee employers, 92.1% of the respondents, indicated secondary schools should emphasize preparing for entry-level employment (McNelly, Pierce, and Blowers, 1990).
20. Tennessee employers desire entry-level employees to have prior work experience in a similar job, high school vocational education and cooperative education on-the-job training (Petty, McNelly, and Searle, 1989).

Methodology

A questionnaire, The Tennessee Secondary Student Employment Survey (TSSES) was developed that consisted of demographic questions and 31 opinion items pertaining to high school students working.

Two forms were used--one for the students, and one for the parents. The opinion items were identical. A pilot study of high school twelfth grade students was conducted. An internal reliability estimate of .82 was computed from the senior respondents.

The population was defined as all public high school students grade 9-12 and one of their parents in Tennessee. A sample size of 382 students and 382 parents was established for each grade level. Public high schools were randomly selected by school attendance and grade levels were randomly assigned. All students and one of their parents in the randomly selected school and grade level were eligible to participate. This procedure yielded useable responses of 1,980 students and 1,021 parents.

Simple and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The simple statistics were frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The inferential statistics included linear regression which included a t-test to ascertain significant statistical differences.

The following research questions were used as basis for guiding this research. The research questions are:

1. What are the opinions of Tennessee public high school students about working part-time?
2. What are the opinions of the parents of Tennessee public high school students about working part-time?
3. Is there a difference in opinions between high school students and their parents about the effects of working part-time during the school year?

Findings

The findings presented are based on the useable responses available for analysis. Some cumulative totals varied due to respondent error on certain items. Statistical procedures utilized with SAS (1989) corrected for theses errors for purposes of statistical comparisons. Demographics for the students may be found in Table 1 and for the parents in Table 2.

Parent Responses

Of the parents responding, 403 or 38.6% indicated their son or daughter presently has a part-time job. In a related question, 729 or 83.2% of the parents would like for their sone or daughter to have a

part time job. The majority of the parents, 82.7% or 853, indicated a representative from the school should monitor students' school progress.

Table 1

General Student Demographics (N=1980)*

Grade Level	N	%	Sex	N*	%
9	437	22.1	Female	1097	55.9
10	388	19.6	Male	865	44.1
11	552	27.9			
12	603	30.5			

Race	N	%	Location	N	%
Black	495	25.2	Rural	1200	62.6
White	1425	72.6	Urban	780	39.4
Hispanic	15	0.8			
Other	28	1.4			

Worked During School Year	N	%	Participated in Coop Voc. Ed.	N**	%
Yes	1067	54.0	Yes	308	30.6
No	908	46.0	No	697	69.4

* Ns may vary due to non response by students.

** Students who had not worked during the school year were not eligible to respond to this question

With respect to the question--Should high school students be allowed to hold part-time jobs during the school year?--970 or 93.2% of the responding parents selected "Yes". The majority of the parents, 51.9%, felt a high school student should be allowed to work between 16 to 20 hours per week. Two times were most frequently indicated as provided to how late should a high school student be allowed to work the evening before a school day. Twenty-nine point nine percent (29.9%) or 309 of the responding parents said 9:00 PM. The most frequently offered time was 10:00 PM by 333 or 32.3% of the responding parents. The majority of the parents, 82.7% or 853, indicated a representative from the school should monitor students' school progress.

Table 2

General Parent Demographics (N=1035)*

Sex of Parents Who Responded

Sex	N	%
Female	759	74.3
Male	262	25.7
Total	1021	

Age of Parents Who Responded

Age	N	%
Up to 35	190	20.4
36-40	310	33.3
41-45	231	24.8
46-50	128	13.7
51-55	44	4.7
56-60	13	1.4
Over 60	16	1.7
Total	932	

Race of Parents Who Responded

Race	N	%
Black	255	25.0
Hispanic	5	0.5
White	748	73.3
Other	13	1.3
Total	1021	

Location of Residence of Parents Who Responded

Location	N	%
Rural	649	63.6
Urban	372	36.4
Total	1021	

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* Ns may vary due to non response of parents.

General Parent Demographics (N=1035)*

Educational Level of Parents Who Responded

Educational Level	N	%
Less than high school	211	20.7
High school graduate	445	43.6
Some college	199	19.5
College graduate	165	16.2
Total	1020	

Number of Children at Home of Parents Who Responded

#	N	%
1	307	29.7
2	406	39.3
3	210	20.3
4	76	7.4
5	18	1.7
6	9	0.9
7	3	0.3
8	1	0.1
Total	1030	

Grade Level of Son or Daughter of Parents Who Responded

Grade Level	N	%
9th	351	33.2
10th	172	16.3
11th	265	25.1
12th	268	25.4
Total	1056	

Son or Daughter Has Part-Time Job

	N	%
Yes	403	38.6
No	641	61.4

* Ns may vary due to non response of parents.

General Parent Demographics (N=1035)*

Son or Daughter Participates in Cooperative Vocational Education

	N	%
Yes	199	19.5
No	823	80.5

Would Like for Son or Daughter to Have Part-Time Job

	N	%
Yes	729	83.2
No	147	16.8

* Ns may vary due to non response of parents.

Student Responses

Of the students not working, 389 or 43.3% responded as the reason for not working or they were not old enough. The second most frequently cited reason for not working was no transportation (324 or 36.2%), and the third most frequently cited reason was "afraid it would hurt my grade average" (319 or 35.6%. Another reason given for not working by 30.7% was that they must help at home. The overall total number and percent of students working could have been much greater because 28.8% of those not working indicated they had tried to get a job but haven't been hired.

Tennessee public high school students are working during the school year for a variety to reasons. The five highest rated reasons for working in descending order are: (a) buy clothes, (b) have some spending money, (c) buy a car, (d) help pay for school expenses, and (e) pay for car insurance. The students are working to earn money to spend on items that are very important to them.

The percent of students working during the school year when grouped by grade level was 12.35% for the 9th, 30.67% for the 10th, 50.72% for the 11th, and 72.13% for the 12th. Of the students not working during the school year, 494 or 55.6% worked during the summer. Only 134 or 14.96% of those not working during the school year stated they would not like to be earning their own money from a job during the school year.

The average weekly take-home earning went from $93.56 for the 9th grade to $101.99 for the 12th grade. The average number of hours worked each week was 22.16 for the females and 25.28 for the males, 24.10 for rural and 22.96 for urban, and 25.60 for co-op and 22.71 for non co-op students. The average earnings since school started was $1,900 for the females and $2,246 for the males, and $2,644 for co-op and $1,797 for non co-op students.

A projection was made for the local and state sales taxes paid by the Tennessee high school students. A total of $19,366,299 in projected sales taxes was paid based on projected earnings for all working public high school students which was $254,819,727.

Total Student to Parent on Opinion Items

The Tennessee Secondary Students' Employment Survey (TSSES) consisted of one form for the students and one form for the parents. Each form of the TSSES had 31 identical opinion items with response categories and values of Strongly Disagree 1, Disagree 2, Agree 3, and Strongly Agree 4.

Table 3 displays a complete listing of mean ratings on the respective items for Parents and Students. Eighteen significant mean differences were established between the parents and students.

Table 3

Students and Parents Overall Comparisions

Item	Student Mean	Parent Mean	Sig. Mean Diff.
1. High school students should have the benefit of holding a paying job before graduating.	3.46	3.28	-.18
2. Paid work experience is the best way for high school students to learn what employers expect.	3.24	3.22	-
3. All high school students should be prepared for the world of work upon graduation.	3.35	3.24	-.11
4. High school students learn how to work with others when they work for pay.	3.08	3.05	
5. Working part-time while in high school helps students:			
a. improve their grades.	2.11	2.17	+.06
b. improve their school attendance.	2.17	2.24	+.07
c. improve their attitude toward high school.	2.52	2.52	
d. learn how to improve their money management.	3.31	3.20	-.11
6. Working for pay is as valuable as high school course work.	2.55	2.47	-.08
7. Academic credit should be awarded for:			
a. any paid work experience during the school year.	2.59	2.50	-.09
b. paid work that is supervised by high school personnel.	2.79	2.77	
8. Vocational subjects help high school students relate to the world of work.	3.26	3.20	-.06
9. Some employers take advantage of students who work part time.	3.09	3.03	-.06

Table 3 (Cont'd)

Students and Parents Overall Comparisions

Item		Student Mean	Parent Mean	Sig. Mean Diff.
10.	High school students should be allowed to work as many hours as they wish.	2.57	1.98	-.59
11.	Working part-time while in high school will:			
	a. help students remain in school.	2.38	2.40	
	b. keep students from other school activities.	2.71	2.69	
	c. reduce studying time.	2.81	2.83	
	d. help pay for school expenses.	3.20	3.05	-.15
	e. give students constructive use of their time.	3.05	3.03	
	f. provide valuable work experience.	3.30	3.23	-.07
12.	Academic subjects help students relate to the world of work.	2.77	2.70	+.07
13.	High school students should be limited to 20 hours of work each week (including weekends).	2.34	2.85	+.51
14.	Working more than 20 hours a week will cause high school students' grades to drop.	2.41	2.75	+.34
15.	A high school representative should assist students in securing part-time jobs.	2.79	2.89	+.10
16.	Handicapped high school students should be provided extra assistance by a high school representative in securing a part-time job.	3.05	3.07	
17.	Working part-time while in high school helps students:			
	a. feel better about themselves.	3.08	3.08	
	b. improve time management.	3.07	3.06	
	c. become more responsible for their actions.	3.24	3.13	-.11
	d. appreciate their high school courses.	2.67	2.63	
	e. make realistic career decisions.	3.24	3.18	-.16
18.	High schools should emphasize preparing for college.	3.47	3.46	

The greatest significant difference (-.59) was for Item 10--High School students should be allowed to work as many hours as they wish with a 2.57 mean rating for the students and a 1.98 for the parents. The second greatest significant difference (+.51) was for Item 13--High school students should be limited to 20 hours of work each week (including weekends), with a 2.34 mean rating for the students and a 2.85 for the parents. The third greatest significant difference (+.34) was for Item 14--Working more than 20 hours a week will cause high school students' grades to drop with a 2.41 mean rating for the students and a 2.75 for the parents.

The three items with the highest mean ratings were the same for both students and parents. The items are: Item 18--High schools should emphasize preparing for college--had the highest mean rating with a mean rating of 3.47 for the students and 3.46 for the parents; Item 1--High school students should have the benefit of holding a paying job before graduating--had the second highest mean ratings with a mean rating of 3.46 for the students and 3.28 for the parents; and Item 3--All high school students should be prepared for the world of work upon graduation had the third highest mean rating of 3.35 for the students and 3.24 for the parents.

Of the items with the lowest mean ratings, the students and parents both rated Item 5a--Working part-time while in high school helps students improve their grades--and Item 5b--Working part-time while in high school helps students improve their school attendance--among their lowest three items. The three items with the lowest mean ratings for the parents are:

Item 10 High school students should be allowed to work as many hours as they wish, with a mean rating of 1.98.

Item 5a Working part-time while in high school helps students improve their grades, with a mean rating of 2.17.

Item 5b Working part-time while in high school helps students improve their school attendance, with a mean rating of 2.24.

The items with the lowest mean ratings for the students are:

Item 5a Working part-time while in high school helps students improve their grades, with a mean rating of 2.11.

Item 5b Working part-time while in high school helps students improve their school attendance with a mean rating of 2.17.

Item 13 High school students should be limited to 20 hours of work each week (including weekends), with a mean rating of 2.34.

Conclusions

Students Conclusions

Working part-time during high school. By referring to the mean ratings, the students as a total group feel that working part-time during high school helps students:

1. Learn how to improve their money management.
2. Feel better about themselves.
3. Improve time management.
4. Become more responsible for the actions.
5. Make realistic career decisions.
6. Pay for school expenses.
7. Give students constructive use of their time.
8. Provide valuable work experience.
9. Enable students to learn what employers want.
10. Learn how to work with others.

Additional conclusions. In addition, the students feel:

1. Formal vocational cooperative education type programs will help students remain in school while students in part-time jobs outside of the cooperative type vocational program will not receive help for remaining in school.
2. Handicapped high school students should be provided extra assistance by a high school representative in securing a part-time job.
3. A high school representative should assist students in securing part-time employment.
4. Some employers do take advantage of high school students who work part-time.
5. High school students should **not** be limited to 20 hours of work each week.

6. Working more than 20 hours during the school week will not cause students' grades to drop.
7. High school students should be allowed to work as many hours as they wish.
8. Vocational and academic subjects do help high school students to relate to the "world of work." Vocational subjects help more than academic subjects.
9. All high school students should be prepared for the world of work upon graduation.
10. High schools should emphasize preparing for college.
11. High school students should have the benefit of holding a paying job before graduation.
12. Academic credit should be awarded for paid work experience during the school year.
13. Academic credit should be awarded for paid work that is supervised by a high school representative. The supervised item received higher mean ratings by the students.
14. Holding a part-time job during the school year will not help students remain in school.
15. Holding a part-time job during the school year will keep students from other activities.
16. Holding a part-time job during the school year will reduce studying time.

Parents Conclusions

Working part-time during high school. By referring to the mean ratings, the parents as a total group feel that high school students working part-time during high school helps students:

1. Learn how to improve their money management.
2. Feel better about themselves.
3. Improve time management.
4. Become more responsible for their actions.
5. Appreciate their high school courses.
6. Make realistic career decisions.
7. Pay for school expenses.
8. Use their time constructively.
9. Gain valuable work experience.
10. Learn how to work with others when they work for pay.

Additional conclusions. The parents also feel:

1. High school students should have the benefit of holding a paying job before graduating.

2. Paid work experience is the best way for high school students to learn what employers want.
3. All high school students should be prepared for the world of work upon graduation.
4. Vocational subjects help high school students relate to the world of work.
5. Some employers take advantage of students who work part-time.
6. Academic subjects help students relate to the world of work but not as well as the vocational subjects.
7. High school students should be limited to 20 hours of work each week (including weekends).
8. Working more than 20 hours a week will cause high school students' grades to drop.
9. A high school representative should assist students in securing part-time jobs.
10. Handicapped high school students should be provided extra assistance by a high school representative in securing a part-time job.
11. High schools should emphasize preparing for college.
12. Academic credit should be awarded for paid work that is supervised by high school personnel.
13. High school students should **not** be allowed to work as many hours as they wish.
14. Working part-time while in high school will reduce studying time.
15. Working part-time while in high school will keep students from other school activities.

Student - Parent Agreement

Both students and parents agreed that working part-time will **not**:

1. Help students improve their grades.
2. Improve their school attendance.
3. Help students remain in school.

General Conclusions

Of the thirty one (31) opinion items eighteen (18) were found to be significantly different between the students and their parents. The item with the greatest significant difference pertained to the allowing the students to work as many hours as they wish. The parents were not in agreement with the item while the students were more in agreement. The second item of greatest difference pertained to limiting the number of hours of work each week to 20 hours. The parents were more in agreement with the item than the students. On the third item of greatest significant difference--Working more than 20 hours a week will

cause high school students grades to drop--the parents were more in agreement with the item than the students.

Recommendations

1. Working part-time while in high school should be recognized as beneficial to the students.
2. It also needs to be recognized that working part-time while in high school will not improve the students' grades, school attendance, or probability that students will remain in school.
3. In addition to cooperative vocational education, a formal program should be implemented to provide an orchestrated delivery of services for students working part-time during the school year by a variety of existing high school staff.
4. Guidelines should be developed which would provide direction for the number of hours and the appropriateness of the hours students could work during the school year.
5. The purposes of a high school education should be reexamined and adjustments made to better provide a balance between preparing for the world of work and preparing for college.
6. Officials should recognize high school part-time employment as a significant subset of the workforce.
7. Local and state officials should recognize the tax contributions that high school students working part-time are making.

Questions for Further Research

1. How do private high school students' and their parents' opinions pertaining to working part-time during the school year differ from public high school students and their parents?
2. To what extent does work experience during high school have on students employability?
3. To what extent does work experience during high school have on hiring decisions by employers for full-time employment?
4. To what extent does part-time work during the high school years add to stability in employment following high school?
5. To what extent does working part-time assist high school students in being better able to clarify career goals and objectives?

6. What activities or changes could a high school add which would better enable all students to feel better about their high school education?

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